

The January 8, 2024 Wahkon City Council meeting was called to order by Mayor Ronda Bjornson at 6:08 pm and began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Proper notice was posted for attendance of two councilmembers via interactive technology in accordance with Minn. Stat. 13D.02 and their locations are open and accessible to the public. Roll Call: Councilmembers physically present were: Bill Thompson, Chip Frederickson, and Ronda Bjornson. Councilmembers present via interactive technology were: Tony Button and Rick Roberts. Both could hear and see all councilmembers and were heard and seen by all in the community hall. Approval of Agenda: Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson to approve agenda. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, Roberts, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

CITY GOVERNMENT ANNUAL REORGANIZATION: Members agreed to keep their commissioner positions from 2023. Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson to make the following 2024 commissioner appointments and designate city representatives as recommended by mayor: Tony Button, Acting Mayor; Ronda Bjornson, Weed Inspector; Jacob Weinreich, Assistant Weed Inspector; Chip Frederickson Wastewater Commissioner; Tony Button, Street & Sidewalk Commissioner; Bill Thompson, Municipal Buildings Commissioner; Rick Roberts, Park Commissioner; Financial Depositories: First National Bank of Milaca, Isle Branch, League of MN Cities 4M Fund Minnesota Municipal Money Market Fund, and Ehlers Investment Partners/Pershing; Newspaper: Mille Lacs Messenger; Accountants: Hoffman, Philipp, & Martell, PLLC; Attorneys: Kennedy & Graven Chartered, Damien F. Toven & Assoc. and Mille Lacs County (MLC) Attorney's Office; Engineers: Short Elliot Hendrickson (S.E.H); Zoning Administration: Saehr Consulting; Financial Advisors: Ehlers Investment Partners, and David Drown Associates Inc.; Insurance Company & Agency: League of MN Cities Insurance Trust and Oberfeld Insurance. Ayes: Frederickson, Thompson, Button, Roberts, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Code of Ethics Forms: Reviewed and initialed by those physically present. Button and Roberts will review their forms upon return from their winter residences.

CONSENT AGENDA: All items listed shall be approved by one motion, unless removed. Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson to approve consent agenda. Ayes: Frederickson, Thompson, Button, Roberts, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

- A) Meeting Minutes: 12/11/23 Council
- B) Initiative Foundation \$250 Donation Approved Via 2024 Budget Meeting
- C) 2024 IRS Standard Mileage Rate .67 Cents from 65.5 Cents: New Wahkon Rate
- D) League of MN Cities (LMC) Dividend Announcement \$361
- E) Mille Lacs County (MLC) November Tax Settlement \$113,882.41
- F) Charitable Gambling Report: 11/2023 Isle Lions Club Zero & Mille Lacs Drift Skippers Zero
- G) Treasurer's Report 2023 Year End Unaudited Schedule 1 Report
- H) Treasurer's Report 12/31/2023 Ending Balance \$552,819.78 Cash; \$772,514.06 Investments & Receipts Register
- I) Interim Financial Monthly Analysis Report
- J) Voided Check List 2023
- K) Disbursement Register 1/8/2024 Date Range 12/12/2023 – 1/8/2024 Total \$120,705.90

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS & POLICIES: New Updated Personnel Policy Review & Adoption If Applicable: Clerk reviewed a few topics, some of which were answered by City Attorney Dave Anderson via email. Another attorney from Kennedy & Graven assisted in writing this policy. Full time employee definition in current policy is 40 hours per week, year-round but under time reporting it states "Full-time, non-exempt employees are expected to work 30 hours per workweek..." The 30 hours was due to clerk/treasurer hours increasing over her 30-year tenure from four hours in the

beginning to more. Only the past few years has it been closer to 40 per week. Previous council, with citizen support, agreed to supply FT employees with health insurance and sick days, the 30 hours was added by the city attorney. New policy has been amended wherein both full-time definition and time reporting sections are 30 hours or more. New policy states core hours for city hall employees to work are noon to 5 pm Monday – Friday based upon clerk’s request to limit office hours. However, she will at minimum work 30 hours per week, including meetings.

There are ten mandatory holidays per statute, while Columbus Day and Friday after Thanksgiving are optional. This policy has twelve holidays, which he states is not uncommon. Something interesting is he strongly impresses that no business should be conducted on mandatory holidays. “I understand that certain exempt or essential employees might need to work on those days, and that’s not an issue, but I would advise you not to let members of the public come into city hall on those days to pay utility bills, submit applications, make data requests, etc.” Current policy lists holidays but doesn’t specify paid holidays anywhere; attorney that drafted it obviously missed it. New policy includes such a section. Part time/seasonal employees are now noted as not being eligible for holidays. Language was added to prorate based on hours for PT employees. Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson, to adopt newly revised Employee Personnel Policy. Ayes: Frederickson, Thompson, Button, Roberts, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: New State Flag & Seal Discussion: Tony Button: Extremely disappointed in the new flag design as it really doesn’t say anything. Seal is better than it was but the flag lacks something. Crow Wing County board opposed it. Clerk hasn’t received their resolution and letter they submitted yet. Button found out MLC hasn’t flown the state flag since the legal battle over reservation and law enforcement. Button believes we need to write a letter of opposition. With all the talent in the state it could be much better. Seven-sided star, representing the North Star, looks like a dot from afar. Motion by Button, seconded by Thompson to write a formal letter of opposition to the newly designed state flag. Ayes: Frederickson, Thompson, Button, Roberts, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously. Clerk will draft letter after receiving Crow Wing County’s information and per council request, will inform Cities of Isle & Onamia.

REPORTS: Wastewater: Weinreich: not a lot going on. Ponds are all frozen now. Our wastewater gallons and Mille Lacs Island Resort both increased due to 3” rain, which brought primary pond level up.

Employee & Councilmember Updates: Roeschlein: Explained how Thanksgiving renter had dogs in the hall, which they didn’t cleanup after; damage deposit wasn’t fully refunded. Their next rental for Christmas wasn’t as bad as they did clean up, however, dog hair is still being found. Council agreed to revise hall rental form stating no animals are allowed. MN Basic Code of Ordinances has been drafted by City Attorney Damien Toven and clerk will soon begin reviewing it before bringing to council.

MLC Sheriff’s 4th Quarter 2023 Report & 2017-2023 Yearly Analysis: Last quarter of 2024 had 39 calls, down 16.9% over 2022. Council agreed it would be nice to have them attend a meeting once in a while.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson to adjourn. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, Roberts, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:29 pm.

Karrie Roeschlein, Clerk/Treasurer

The February 12, 2024 Wahkon City Council meeting was called to order by Mayor Ronda Bjornson at 6:02 pm and began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Proper notice was posted for attendance of two councilmembers via interactive technology in accordance with Minn. Stat. 13D.02 and their locations are open and accessible to the public. Roll Call: Councilmembers physically present were: Bill Thompson, Chip Frederickson, and Ronda Bjornson. Councilmember present via interactive technology: Tony Button. He could hear and see all councilmembers and was heard and seen by all in the community hall. Absent: Councilmember Rick Roberts as he was unable to join the meeting due to email & technical issues.

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson to approve agenda. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA: All items listed shall be approved by one motion, unless removed. Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson to approve consent agenda: Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

- A) Meeting Minutes: 1/8/2024 Council
- B) Initiative Foundation Donation Thank You
- C) Pearl Crisis Center Donation Thank You
- D) CenterPoint Energy Natural Gas Rate Increase Letter
- E) League of MN Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) Regional Safety Group Program 2024 Rate Increase of 5%
- F) LMCIT Coverage Liability Waiver Form: Member Does Not Waive Monetary Limits On Municipal Tort Liability Per Agent Recommendation
- G) Mille Lacs County (MLC) December Tax Settlement \$498.01
- H) Mille Lacs Equal Rights Foundation LG220 Exempt Permit Application 7/17/2024 Raffle Acknowledged With No Waiting Period As Customary
- I) Charitable Gambling Report: 12/2023 Isle Lions Club Zero & Mille Lacs Drift Skippers \$1312.74
- J) Treasurer's Report 1/31/2024 Ending Balance \$482,248.64 Cash; \$764,540.54 Investments
- K) Interim Financial Monthly Analysis Report
- L) Disbursement Register 2/12/2024 Date Range 1/9 – 2/12 Total \$82,153.88

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS & POLICIES: Resolution No. 2024-0212 To Adopt An Electronic Funds Wire Transfer Policy: Believe Purchase Policy has section on this but according to City of Onamia's auditor, resolution required annually. Used City of Isle resolution sample. "Whereas, the city of Wahkon recognizes that from time to time it may be beneficial and/or required to use electronic funds transfers for receipts and deposits and instead of checks for paying of vendor claims, bond and debt obligation payments, purchases, investments (selling/purchasing), State and Federal payroll taxes..." Motion by Thompson, seconded by Frederickson to adopt Resolution No. 2024-0212. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: Fourth of July Fireworks? \$7590.14 Event Fund balance. City attorney confirmed city soliciting donations is allowed, usually 60-65%. Display & operators' budget for past two years was \$6000; one-minute display \$1000. Button worked with crew to delay time between shots for longer display. Mayor's goal is that no city funds be used. WAVE Committee will begin fund raising. Motion by Button, seconded by Frederickson authorizing Fourth of July event on 7/4/2024 Thursday with \$7000 budget through North Star Fireworks. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

Isle Fire Service Contract \$10,312.54: Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson to approve Isle Fire Dept 3/1/2024 annual contract for \$10,312.54 payable from Charitable Gambling Fund. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously. Price will increase 5% effective with 3/1/2025 contract.

Presidential Nomination Primary (PNP) Election, Tuesday 3/5 @ Wahkon Community Hall 7 am – 8 pm. “Before voting, election law requires that you select which major political party’s ballot you want. If you refuse to select one party’s ballot, you cannot vote. Your choice of major political party will not be public information, except that it will be made available to election officials and to the chair of the major political party that you select after the presidential primary.” If you can’t vote on 3/5, you can go directly to MLC to vote early beginning now.

United States Dept of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service Funding Obligated Authorizing WW Project Bidding: Began working on this in 2021. Loan closing instructions are finalized and solicitation process may begin. Council motion at 6/12/2023 meeting authorized City Engineer Dave Blommel to advertise and accept bids on behalf of the city with construction this spring/summer. Installing water meters for accurate sewer billing will be decided once construction bids are known.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: MnDOT 2026 Project Questions: SEH Memorandum: 1) Trees on North Main: Council agreed to leave the iconic White Pine. Smaller Spruce Pine can go if needed. Sidewalk leading to park has some issues, especially between 3rd & 4th Streets. 2) Existing North Main: Council discussed options and prefers option 3 to remove pavement and leave flat area with new native seed. 3) South Main Drainage: Curb will be added on north/west side of 27 along with catch basin. “That pipe crossing the trail will see less flow in this scenario, but MnDOT is afraid of the appearance of sending more water that direction.” Council understands their concern but if it is engineered with less flow, that is best scenario to alleviate safety issue of water standing in drive lane on inside curve of highway.

MN State Flag Redesign Opposition Letters & Petition Link: After reading Crow Wing County opposition article, Button requested this matter be placed on last month’s agenda. All three cities, Isle, Wahkon and Onamia, sent letters to the Governor and all representatives. Clerk read email received today from State Representative Ron Kresha stating “This has been ridiculous. We have so many more important things to do at the Capitol like addressing the needs of nursing homes, childcare and education issues, etc. The majority and the Governor have decided this is the most important thing. We won’t give up.” Mayor received response letters to her home address. Isle clerk shared link for people to sign petition opposing the designs, which was included in agenda. Button questioned if people could sign it at city hall. Not everyone has cell phone or computers. Would need to investigate if this is acceptable. Citizens could come to city hall and use link.

REPORTS: Wastewater: Weinreich: Mille Lacs Island Resort (MLIR) was asked to remove large debris pile located in road leading to their lift station. Jake can squeeze city truck through but it would hamper emergency repairs. Joyce Bzoscie replied they would take care of it. Thursday early morning in April works best for Bjornson and Frederickson for annual meeting.

Employee & Councilmember Updates: Weinreich: Received quote from Rocky’s Tree Service for Cottonwood in City Park and Ash tree with four individual trunks in city lot across from Mugg’s. Frederickson had offered to bring skidster for Cottonwood removal if others could help. Bjorn Bjornson could assist but doesn’t have dump trailer or place to bring debris. Rocky quoted \$1000 to haul brush and wood away, grind stump and cleanup. Coordinating volunteers and equipment, even with Bjorn’s expertise, isn’t worth someone getting hurt when it can be done professionally. Council agreed to hire Rocky’s Tree Service to remove Cottonwood and Ash trees for total price of \$3850.

MN Rural Water Association (MRWA) Conference: Weinreich: May consider attending first day of March conference in St. Cloud, depending on snowplowing. He doesn't need credits but this is great networking opportunity and would be his first attendance on behalf of Wahkon. Motion by Frederickson, seconded by Thompson authorizing Weinreich to attend MRWA conference. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

Wahkon Days: Roeschlein: Will council again rent portable toilets and wash sink? Motion by Thompson, seconded by Frederickson to rent two portable toilets and one wash sink for Wahkon Days in the amount of \$430 using Community Event Fund. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously.

Entrance Signs: Bjornson questioned when sign options would be forthcoming? Clerk forgot about kick off meeting that she and Mayor were to attend virtually with CJ Fernandez of Aune Fernandez Landscape Architects last week. MnDOT signed \$50k contract with them on behalf of Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway (LMLSB) for byway design concept plan. This includes Wahkon Main Street Project design, including entrance sign options, Garrison 169 and concourse, develop standard LMLSB kiosk and conceptual landscape plan. Clerk will keep council posted.

Zoning: None: No official zoning report, however, Clerk received update on John Wilson's progress to obtain permission to build retirement home on his cabin property relative to Indian Burial Mound. His attorney has received State Archaeologist permission and now awaits decision from MN Indian Affairs Council. He will share this information with the city in hopes of assisting others in same situation.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Thompson, seconded by Frederickson to adjourn. Ayes: Thompson, Frederickson, Button, and Bjornson. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:36 pm.

Karrie Roeschlein, Clerk/Treasurer

